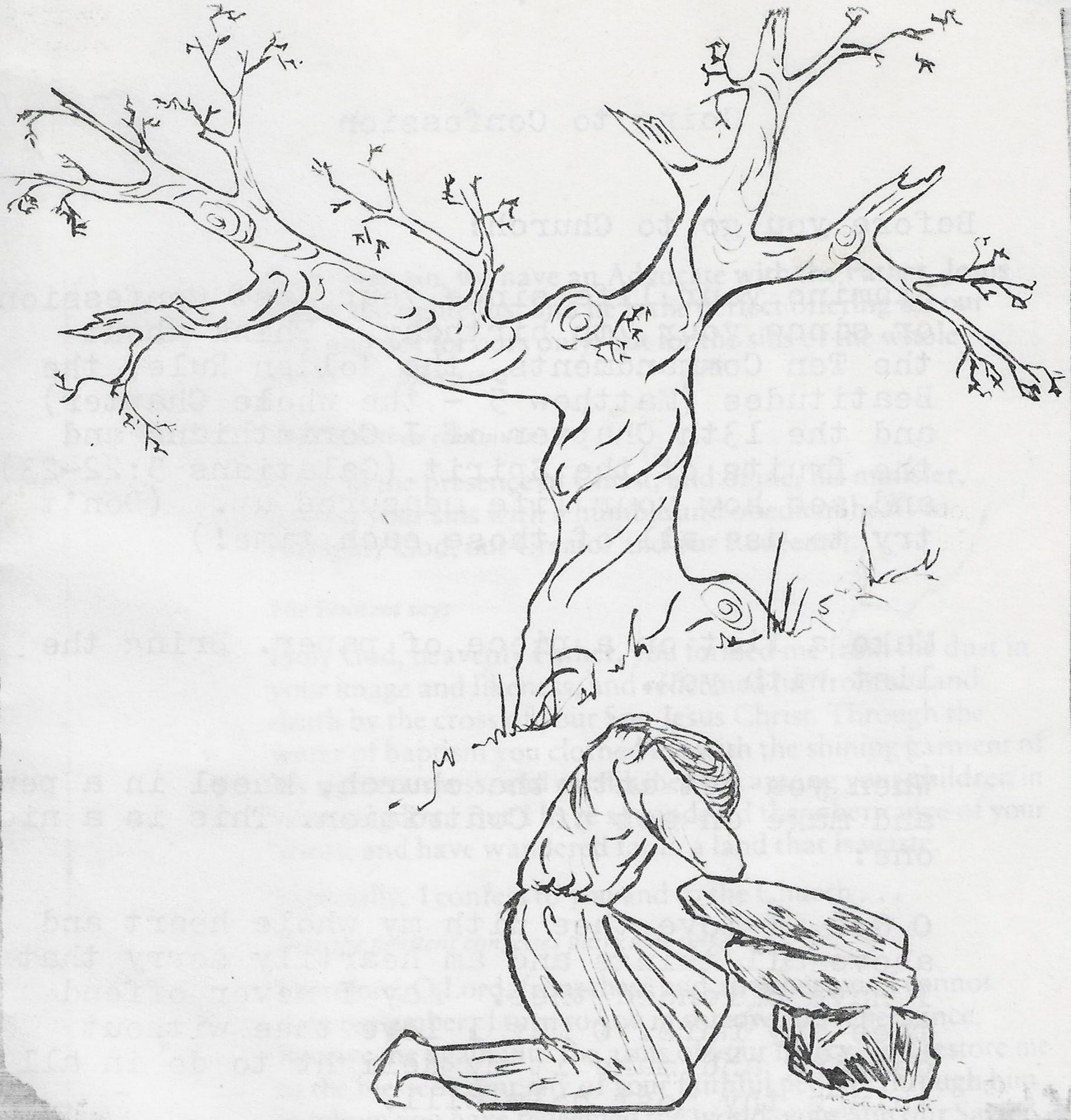


Manual on Confession

for young people

Saint Clement's Church

Going to Confession

Before you go to Church:

Examine your life since your last Confession or since your 7th birthday. Think about the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, the Beatitudes (Matthew 5 - the whole Chapter) and the 13th Chapter of I Corinthians and the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and see how your life measures up. (Don't try to use all of those each time!)

Make a list on a piece of paper. Bring the list with you.

When you get into the church, kneel in a pew and make an act of Contrition. This is a nice one:

O God, I love thee with my whole heart and above all things and am heartily sorry that I have offended thee. May I never offend thee any more. O May I love thee without ceasing and make it my delight to do in all things thy most holy will.

If you must wait, quietly tell Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament how much you love Him. Just saying, "Jesus I love you" is prayer enough if you want to mean it.

When your turn comes, go into the confessional, kneel and say: Bless me Father, for I have sinned.

Father will say: The Lord be in thy heart and upon thy lips, that so thou mayest worthily confess all thy sins; In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Now, you say: I confess to God Almighty, and all the Saints and to you, Father, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and deed, by my fault, by my own fault, by my own most grievous fault. Especially I accuse myself of the following sins since my last confession which was _____ weeks ago.

Now, simply, without exaggerating or excusing, tell your sins to Jesus in the presence of the priest. Having a list is a big help here. If you have made your list carefully and sincerely, you may just read it.

Then you say: For these and all my other sins which I cannot now remember, I am heartily sorry, I firmly purpose amendment, a and ask pardon of God, and of you, Father, penance, counsel and absolution. Wherefore I beg Blessed Mary, all the Saints, and you, Father, to pray for me to the Lord our God. Amen.

Father may ask you some questions. Answer simply, the best you can. Father may give you some advice. Try hard to remember it. (Sometimes I take a note or two.) Father will say, "For your penance, say....." He will mention a prayer or a psalm. He probably will include the Our Father and Hail Mary. Try to remember what it is. (A note here is a help)

Father says: Almighty God have mercy upon thee, forgive thee thy sins and bring thee to everlasting life. You say: AMEN.

Father says: The Almighty and merciful Lord grant thee pardon, absolution and remission of thy sins. You say: AMEN.

Father says: Our Lord Jesus Christ who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences: And by his authority committed unto me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, ✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

You say: AMEN

Father says: The merits of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the prayers of his holy Mother, the blessed Virgin Mary, and of all the Saints, whatsoever good thou hast done or evil thou hast endured, be unto thee for the remission of sins, the increase of grace, and the reward of eternal life; And the ✠ blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, be upon thee and remain with thee for ever.

You say: Amen.

Father says: Go in peace; the Lord hath put away all thy sins. And pray for me, a sinner.

You say: Thank you, Father. And you leave the confessional and go to kneel in a pew. Always kneel far enough away from the Confessional so as not to hear anyone else's confession.

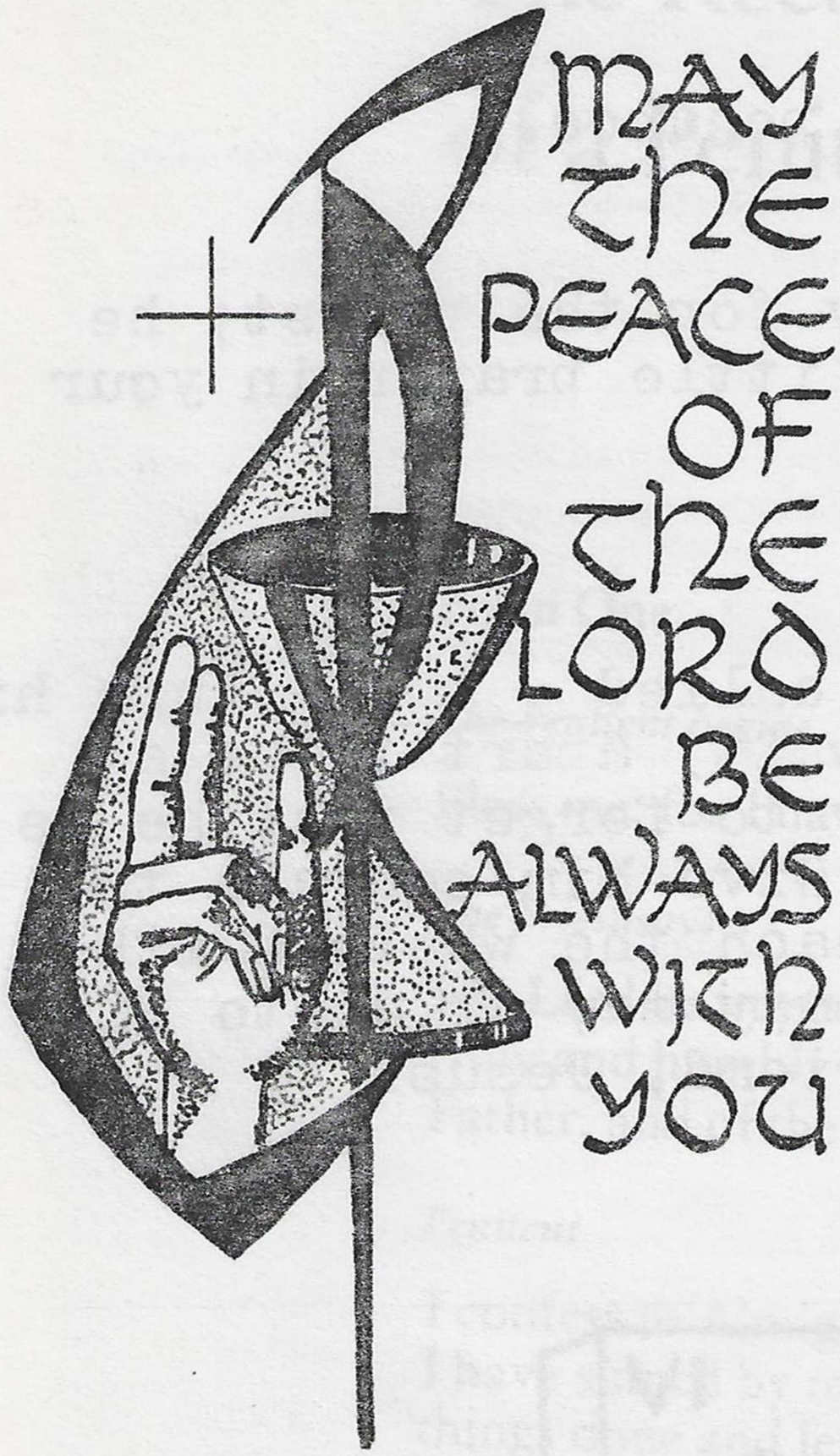
NOW: You silently pray: I THANK THEE, my God, for giving me the forgiveness of my sins, through the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ my Savior. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy Name.

Lord Jesus, I know that it is Thy death and Resurrection that washes away my sins; but I now offer my assigned penance in thanksgiving for Thy great gift.

Now say your assigned penance.

Before you leave, pray for the priest; he asked you to. Say a little prayer in your own words or

Lord Jesus, Thou hast called _____ (use his first name if you know it) apart to be a priest. Help him never to forget that he is set apart to be holy. Give him courage to live and preach and teach the whole faith no matter what people may say or do to Him. Be always his close friend, Jesus.



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What does going to confession do for us?

1. It restores us to full friendship with God.
2. It gives us grace to fight sin in the future
3. It educates our Consciences - makes us aware of our faults
4. Teaches humility

How often?

Regularly - Decide on a <u>regular</u> interval and STICK TO IT! Once a month is good. Mark 1980 now!

Some things you may be wondering about...

If it seems a little scary the first time or so that is because you are thinking about yourself; think about Jesus' love; think about the rejoicing in heaven over your penitence and it will be less fearful.

Remember... this helps you grow in humility and humility is the foundation of a mature spiritual life.

Remember: Father has heard thousands of confessions from all kinds of people. What you say is not going to horrify him; you have not done anything so uniquely horrible that he will take notice. He will listen carefully not only to you but also to the Holy Ghost so that he can give you the advice God wants you to have. But as you leave the confessional he will really forget what you have said.

And after you leave the confessional, neither you nor Father can talk to anyone about what is said inside. Father is bound by a seal. A soldier at gunpoint could not make Father tell what you have said. A judge in a court of law could not make Father tell. Your parents cannot make Father tell. This is very important. The reason you cannot tell is, 1. This is a private thing between you and God. 2. If you told someone and they told someone and they told someone, the 4th person might think Father had broken his seal. And that would be slander of the worst kind. So you keep quiet too.

Normally your confessor will be your parish priest. But if you move to a new place, pick a priest who is used to hearing confessions, expects to hear confessions and makes his own confessions. This is the most important thing in choosing the confessor.

Questions to help you remember your sins.

Remember that you are not interested in anyone else's sins. What someone does to you--even provoking you to sin--is not material for your confession.

If someone acts or speaks unlovingly against you remember how Jesus reacted when they pounded heavy nails through his wrists. He prayed: "Father, forgive them."

The first thing to think about is love. Have I done and said loving things for my parents? For my brothers and sisters? For my neighbors? For my teachers? For my class mates? For my church family?

We confess the things we should have done but did not do. So if your answer to any of the above is "No" you may have to confess <u>sins of omission.</u>

Then we ask: Have I done or said unloving things to my parents? brothers and sisters? teachers? neighbors? parish family? myself? If the answer to any of these is "yes" we may have to confess <u>sins of commission.</u>

These are very general categories; lets have some more specific questions. They will be based on the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), the Golden Rule, the Hymn of Love (I Corinthians 13) and the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) However these overlap at times so I am not going to list things in any exact order. Don't get fussy; if on first reading you think that you have failed on that point, put it down; but don't labor over it. The object is not a LONG list but a sincere list.

Almost everything listed here goes under the heading of venial or minor sin. If you commit a great big sin--a mortal sin--you will know it. You won't need a list to help you find it. It will weigh like a stone on your soul. What is a mortal sin? First of all, it's a big sin...it's really bad. Second, before you did it, you knew it was really bad. Third, you decided to do it anyway. A mortal sin really kills off that lovely life of grace in your soul. And you cannot receive Communion till you confess it.

But you are much more likely to do lots of little things; as soon as you realize what you've done, tell God "O God I'm sorry; help me do better!" Say it silently right away. And then remember it for confession. If we do lots and lots of careless little sins they weaken God's life in us and we haven't the strength to fight bigger sins or to keep on with our spiritual duties.

What is the sin against the Holy Ghost? The unforgivable sin? That is simply the belief that you have no sin. If you are sincerely going to confession regularly, you don't have to worry about that one.

Peace:
Have I deliberately said something that I knew would irritate someone? Picked a fight? Started an argument?
Have I "hit back" with words or blows or some action to "get even"?

Joy
Have I pouted when I did not get my way? Have I moped around the house saying, "What can I do?" instead of finding a book or in some way keeping myself busy?
Have I asked for new toys or clothes expecting them to bring me real joy?
Have I damaged someone else's joy?

Gentleness - Kindness
Have I been hurtful, teasing, critical - especially at home?
Have I failed to be gentle and kind with other children at school? With animals?

Respect -
Have I been truly respectful to teachers and parents, clergy and all older people?
Have I ever barged through a door before an adult instead of holding the door?
Have I interrupted an adult converstation?
Have I failed to use good table manners?
Have I spoken contentiously or disrespectfully at the dinner table?
Have I gone to school or church dressed for play instead of for study or worship?
Have I raced around a grocery store? With or without the cart?
Have I ridden my bike on a sidewalk when there were people on the sidewalk?
Have I sat down on a bus when an older person needed the seat?
Have I distracted adults in their worship?

Goodness
Have I tried to be "like everyone else" when it meant forgetting about being good

Faithfulness
Have I kept any promises I've made?
Have I failed to make my bed and tidy my room daily?
Have I failed to feed and clean my pets?
Have I forgotten my assigned chores?
Have I left homework undone (day school or Sunday School)
Have I left the bathroom sink or towels a mess after I used them?
Have I shunned the unpopular kids at school?
Have I forgotten to pray daily for my teachers, classmates and clergy?

Self-Control - temperance

Have I watched so much TV that I had no time for exercise or homework?
Have I been too busy (with TV, or play) to take out time for quiet time and Bible reading?
Have I used the phone so much others could not use it (at my end or my friends' ends)
Have I failed to eat a balanced diet when it was offered to me?
Have I used drugs?
Have I failed to get enough exercise?
Have I slammed doors in anger?
Lost my temper? Had a tantrum?

My duty towards God:
Do I sometimes pretend not to believe in God?
Do I take God for granted?
Have I forgotten to pray in the morning in my room as soon as I've dressed?
Have I forgotten to pray before meals? What about meals I eat at school?
Have I forgotten to pray before bed?
Have I goofed off at Mass?
Have I distracted the worship of those beside me or behind me?
Have I failed to read over my Sunday School lesson later Sunday and later in the week?
Have I used God's name carelessly?

My duty towards my neighbor:
(My duty towards my neighbor is to love him as myself and to do to all men as I would they should do unto me; to love, honor and help my father and mother; to honor and obey the civil authority; to submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters and to order myself in that lowliness and reverence which becometh a servant of God.

Have I sassed my parents or rebelled or disobeyed?
Have I made things difficult for my parents in the car? In company?

Have I been disrespectful to police, crossing-guards, fire-fighters? Have I allowed others in my presence to criticise the police and other civil servants?

Have I forgotten to pray for leaders in government?

Have I carefully learned the traffic laws before taking my bike out on the street? Or, have I ridden my bike on the left, failed to signal turns, been unmindful to the needs of car drivers and pedestrians? Have I disobeyed to laws about drugs and alcohol?

Have I hated anyone? Have I forgotten how much Jesus loves the people I don't like? Have I forgotten to pray for them? Have I hit someone?

If a group was talking about abortion, have I forgotten to speak up and say that abortion is murder. Have I been too cowardly to speak the truth?

Have I engaged in any kind of sex act outside marriage? Have I been too cowardly in conversation to tell others that all kinds of sex acts outside a man-woman marriage are wrong. (Sexual sins are no more serious than other sins; but people will tell you that sex is fine if the two love each other; this is not true. Sexual sins do have consequences: Babies live a long time; venereal disease can last a whole life time...60-70 years. Chastity means keeping your body pure for Jesus and/or for the husband/wife you will marry.)

Stealing: cheating of any kind in school is stealing. Quoting from books without giving footnote credit is stealing. Shoplifting, however small, is stealing.

//

False witness:

Have I lied to my parents to avoid a punishment or rebuke?

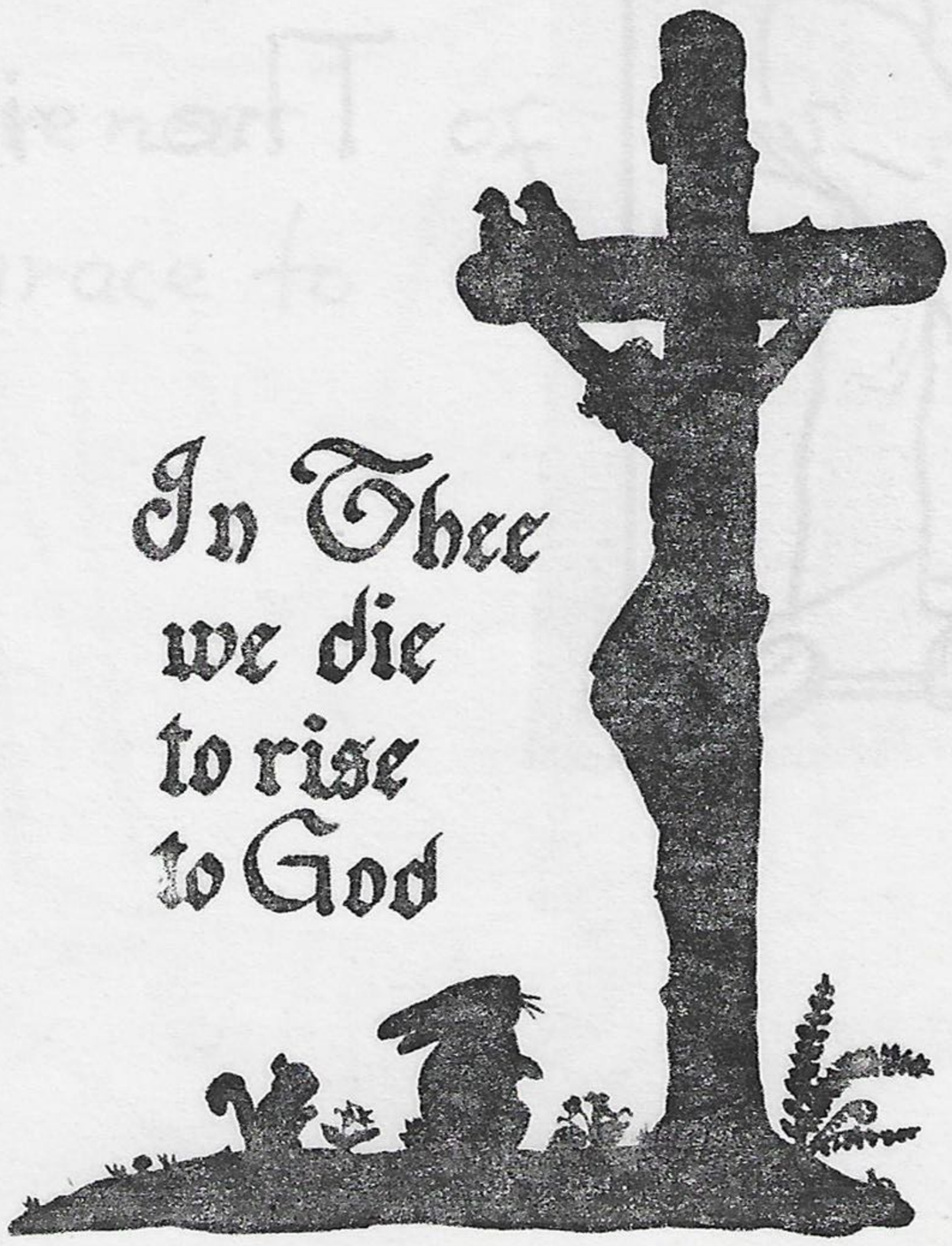
Have I hidden something to avoid punishment?

Have I lied about my faith? Either by saying I was not a Christian or by failing to speak up in class or on the playground or wherever to say what is true.

Have I failed in school to speak up about the true meaning of Haloween, Christmas, Easter?

Have I failed to apologize if I have hurt someone by word or deed. (Try to get this done before you go to Confession or Communion.

Have I acted or thought as if I could be good without God's help?



Confession is a gift
if you sinned after
But God's people re
way. He had given the
. Sins and He taught
again. So the Church
able to confess and

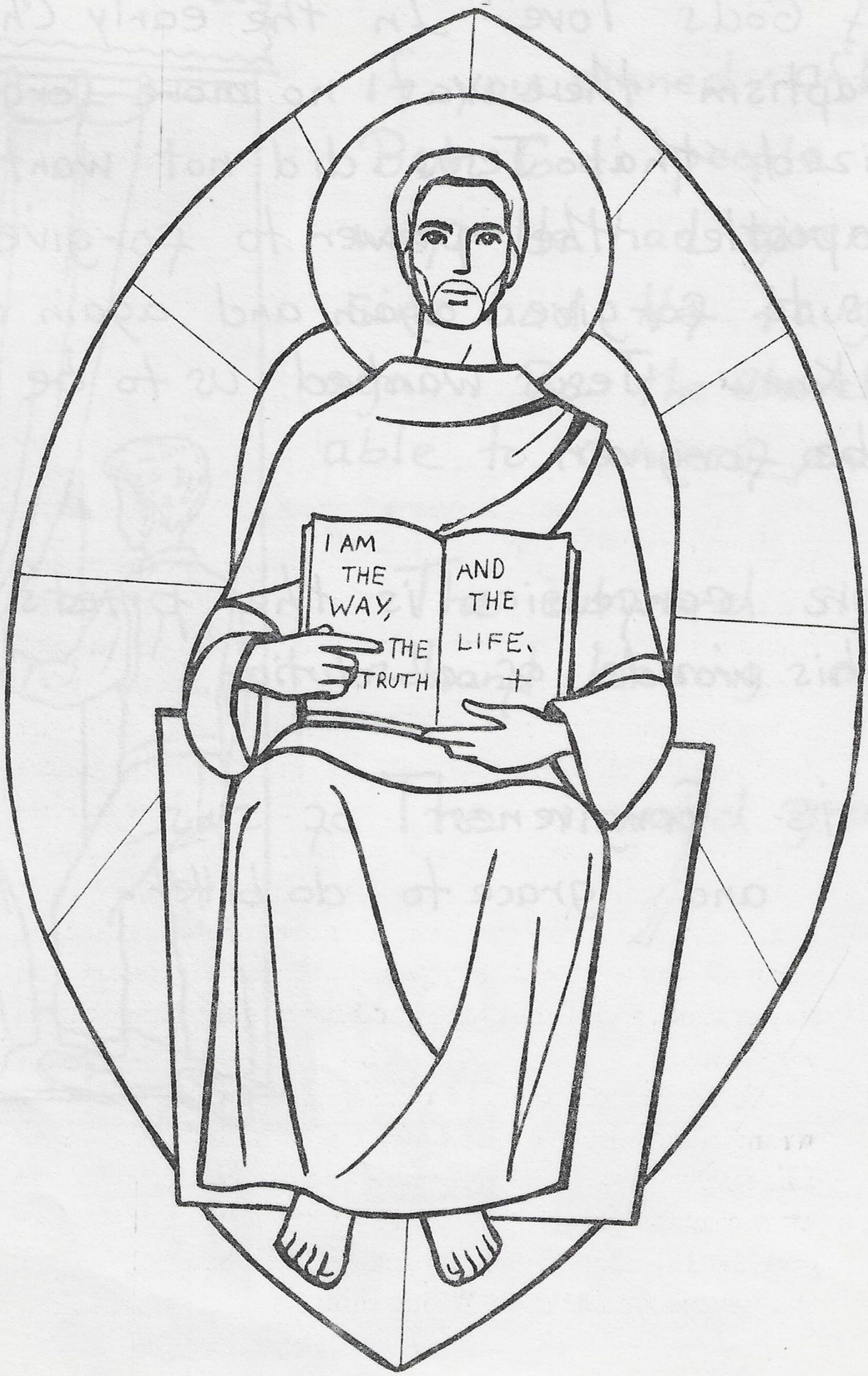
The outward sign
hand blessing and

The inward grace

of God's love - In the early Church Baptism there was no more forgiveness alized that Jesus did not want it apostles the power to forgive us to forgive again and again and knew Jesus wanted us to be be forgiven.

in confession is the priest's his words of absolution.

is forgiveness of sins and grace to do better.


I AM
THE
WAY,
THE
TRUTH
AND
THE
LIFE.
+

A

ABSOLUTION

means forgiveness

IF YOU DO SOMETHING WRONG against me on purpose, and if I *absolve* you, I forgive you. That is, I let you remain my friend instead of paying you back. We are still friends and not enemies.

When you do something wrong at home, you are "in the doghouse." You feel as if you are separated from the others in your family, and you want to get back into their fellowship. When they take you back, you know you are forgiven.

If you are in a gang and do something the others don't like, they may throw you out. You are lonely and maybe sorry for what you did. If you show that you are sorry and stay around, and if they take you back into the gang, that is *absolution.*

We do wrong things to people and to God, and these wrong things break our relationship with God. So we seek His forgiveness. God forgives us because He loves us. He even offers us forgiveness *before* we are sorry. But the forgiveness He offers cannot do us any good until we are sorry enough to stop doing the wrong thing.

The Church helps us ask for forgiveness in four ways:

1. When we go to church we say the General Confession and ask God to forgive us and all others in the congregation. The priest says that God pardons and absolves all who intend to change their ways and to trust God. The priest speaks in the name of God and the Church, and when we hear his words we know we are back in fellowship with God and our fellows.

2. Sometimes a person goes to his minister for help when he is troubled about his sins. They talk over his problems and seek help, ending with a prayer for forgiveness.

3. Some Church people confess their sins privately in the presence of the priest. When the priest is certain of the person's penitence, he declares that God has forgiven him, and the person is restored to fellowship.

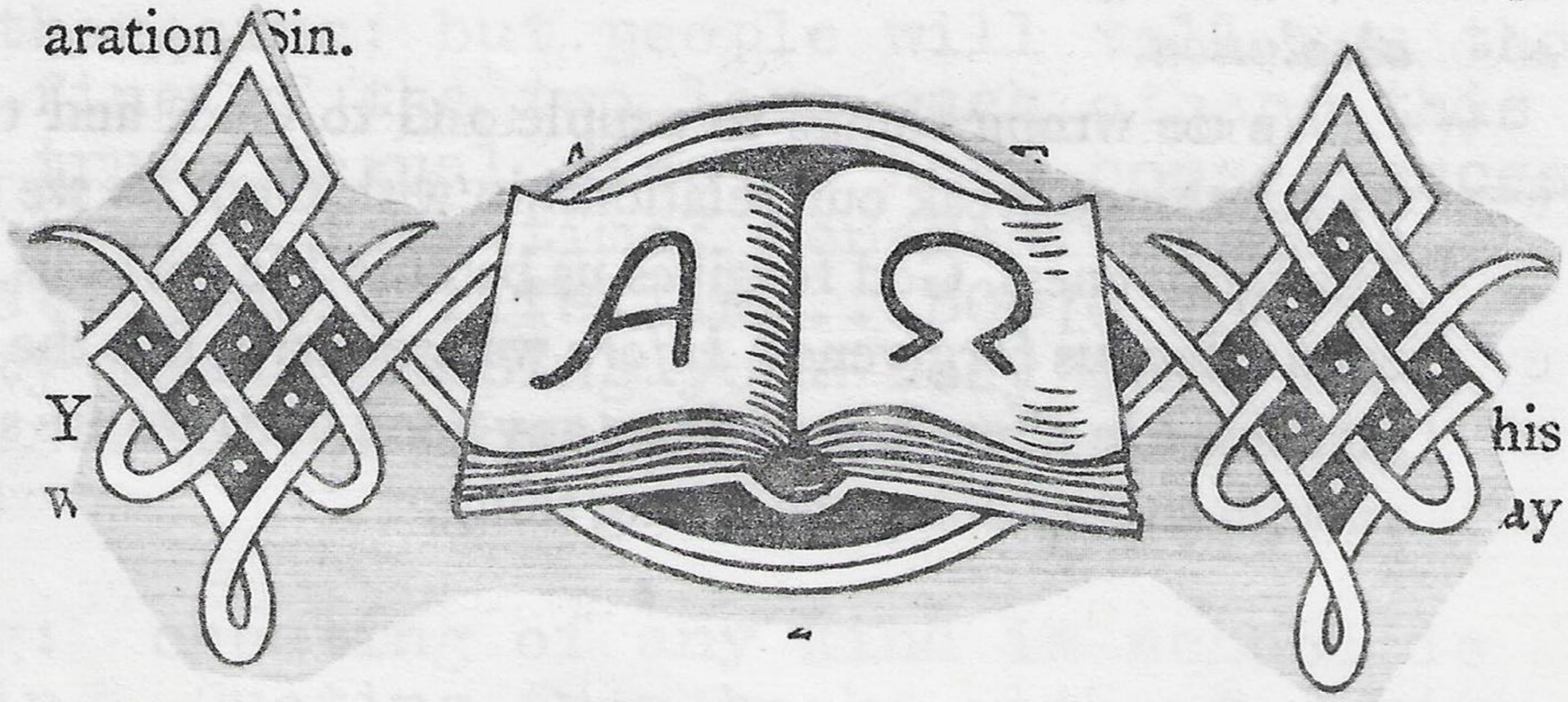
4. In our private prayers we may make our own confession to God and receive His forgiveness.

See the Declaration of Absolution on page 7 of the Prayer Book, and other forms on pages 24, 76, and 323.

See Hymn 435.

What do the words "miserable offenders" mean in the General Confession? Explain "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

See Atonement, Conscience, Forgiveness, Penitence, Separation, Sin.



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RECONCILIATION

is the act of enabling two people to become friends again

JACK'S FATHER HAD A NECKTIE which had been sent to him from Scotland. He wore it only on special, dress-up occasions, and then he felt very handsome. Jack thought the tie was good looking too. One evening when getting dressed to go out to the movies with the gang, Jack put on his father's tie. He hadn't asked permission, and he knew that his father really wouldn't want him to wear it. So when he passed the living-room door he was careful that the tie was covered by his scarf and overcoat collar.

After the movie the gang went to the soda fountain. There it happened. Jack jokingly flipped a few drops of water on Ned across the table. Quick as a flash the two boys were wrestling, and Ned grabbed the tie and ripped it.

The rest of the evening was no fun for Jack. When he got home his father was still sitting in the living room, reading. Sooner or later he'd find out, so Jack decided he'd just go in and face the music.

It was hard to do. Father heard him out without chang-

➡

ing expression, though when he first saw the torn tie, his lips tightened. Finally, when it was all blurted out, Father motioned Jack to a chair. They talked about why Jack had taken the tie and about how much the tie meant to Father. They both knew they couldn't get another like it. They talked about what would be the right penalty—severe enough, but fair.

And then a wonderful thing happened. Jack felt better, and Father was actually smiling! It was strange, but Jack felt closer to his father now than he had for a long time. They talked about lots of things—important to both of them. The necktie incident seemed far off, and the feeling of being back on good terms, even better than before, was wonderful. Father's understanding of the situation was an example of reconciliation.

The Bible says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." (II Cor. 5:19) Christ came into the world and lived, suffered, and died to bring back man—whose sinfulness had kept him apart from God—into a sound relationship with his heavenly Father. Christ rebuilt our friendship with God; there is new hope for us. What had kept us apart need no longer keep us apart. Only God could have brought about this wonderful change.

Our way of showing our thankfulness for God's reconciling love is to try to be the kind of person God wants us to be in our relationships with others. He loves *all* of us, not just some of us.

See Hymn 493.

When someone gets hurt, who has to start the reconciliation? When did God start forgiving men?

See Atonement, Forgiveness, Incarnation, Redemption, Saviour.

19

PENITENCE

is the feeling you have after you have done something wrong, and it may lead to repentance

THE WORDS *penitence* and *repentance* are sometimes used as if they meant the same thing. They both concern sorrow for having done something that is wrong, but they are not exactly the same. Penitence refers more to how I feel: "I am penitent" means "I am very sorry." Repentance refers more to the things I *do* because I am sorry. For instance, I confess my sins; I pray that the injury I have done to another person may be healed, and I determine to help to heal it. I promise myself, and God, that I will try to do better next time.

If you start to smoke on the sly and get caught, you may feel sorry about it. If you are sincere in your feeling, this is an example of penitence. But whether or not you are repentant will depend upon what you do about it. You may be sorry that you got caught, but simply try to find a more secluded place to smoke the next time. This is neither penitence nor repentance! When you admit your mistake and promise that you will not do it again until you are old enough, you are beginning a "turnabout." This change in action is necessary for penitence to become repentance.

The Prayer Book has a Penitential Office (pages 60–63) planned especially for use on Ash Wednesday. It is a service of sorrow which also asks God to set us free from our sins. Among the psalms there are penitential psalms, for example, Psalms 32, 51, 130. And in our hymnal there are penitential hymns, for example, Hymns 499, 521, 435. We need not overdo sorrow for our sins; it would certainly not help us if we spent a lot of time being gloomy. If we just stayed gloomy, we would not get any better. But when we feel sorry for what we have said or done, it does us good honestly to tell God about it and to ask for His help, and finally to make a determined effort to do what we ask God to help us do.

What has the Church to offer to people who are repentant? Why shouldn't Christians be gloomy?

Reconciliation of a Penitent from The Book of Common Prayer

Life's pain
I do not understand,
But walk with God
And hold love's hand.
And as I go I look and see
The marks of nails
Driven there for me.

"Surely He hath borne our griefs,
and carried our sorrows."
IS·53·4

R·E·CLEEVE

This form is not one you will use at St. Clement's nor will it be required of you elsewhere. It is worth reading & thinking through, however, and thanks are due to God that this is now official in our Church.

Concerning the Rite

The ministry of reconciliation, which has been committed by Christ to his Church, is exercised through the care each Christian has for others, through the common prayer of Christians assembled for public worship, and through the priesthood of the Church and its ministers declaring absolution.

The Reconciliation of a Penitent is available for all who desire it. It is not restricted to times of sickness. Confessions may be heard anytime and anywhere.

Two equivalent forms of service are provided here to meet the needs of penitents. The absolution in these services may be pronounced only by a bishop or priest. Another Christian may be asked to hear a confession, but it must be made clear to the penitent that absolution will not be pronounced; instead, a declaration of forgiveness is provided.

When a confession is heard in a church building, the confessor may sit inside the altar rails or in a place set aside to give greater privacy, and the penitent kneels nearby. If preferred, the confessor and penitent may sit face to face for a spiritual conference leading to absolution or a declaration of forgiveness.

When the penitent has confessed all serious sins troubling the conscience and has given evidence of due contrition, the priest gives such counsel and encouragement as are needed and pronounces absolution. Before giving absolution, the priest may assign to the penitent a psalm, prayer, or hymn to be said, or something to be done, as a sign of penitence and act of thanksgiving.

The content of a confession is not normally a matter of subsequent discussion. The secrecy of a confession is morally absolute for the confessor, and must under no circumstances be broken.

The Reconciliation of a Penitent

Form One

The Penitent begins

Bless me, for I have sinned.

The Priest says

The Lord be in your heart and upon your lips that you may truly and humbly confess your sins: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Penitent

I confess to Almighty God, to his Church, and to you, that I have sinned by my own fault in thought, word, and deed, in things done and left undone; especially _____. For these and all other sins which I cannot now remember, I am truly sorry. I pray God to have mercy on me. I firmly intend amendment of life, and I humbly beg forgiveness of God and his Church, and ask you for counsel, direction, and absolution.

Here the Priest may offer counsel, direction, and comfort.

The Priest then pronounces this absolution

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive you all your offenses; and by his authority committed to me, I absolve you from all your sins: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

or this

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered himself to be sacrificed for us to the Father, and who conferred power on his Church to forgive sins, absolve you through my ministry by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and restore you in the perfect peace of the Church. *Amen.*

The Priest adds

The Lord has put away all your sins.

Penitent Thanks be to God.

The Priest concludes

Go (*or* abide) in peace, and pray for me, a sinner.

Form Two

The Priest and Penitent begin as follows

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness;
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.
Wash me through and through from my wickedness,
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions only too well,
and my sin is ever before me.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One,
have mercy upon us.

Penitent Pray for me, a sinner.

Priest

May God in his love enlighten your heart, that you may remember in truth all your sins and his unfailing mercy.
Amen.

The Priest may then say one or more of these or other appropriate verses of Scripture, first saying

Hear the Word of God to all who truly turn to him.

Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. *Matthew 11:28*

God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. *John 3:16*

This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
1 Timothy 1:15

If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the perfect offering for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. *1 John 2:1-2*

The Priest then continues

Now, in the presence of Christ, and of me, his minister, confess your sins with a humble and obedient heart to Almighty God, our Creator and our Redeemer.

The Penitent says

Holy God, heavenly Father, you formed me from the dust in your image and likeness, and redeemed me from sin and death by the cross of your Son Jesus Christ. Through the water of baptism you clothed me with the shining garment of his righteousness, and established me among your children in your kingdom. But I have squandered the inheritance of your saints, and have wandered far in a land that is waste.

Especially, I confess to you and to the Church . . .

Here the penitent confesses particular sins.

Therefore, O Lord, from these and all other sins I cannot now remember, I turn to you in sorrow and repentance. Receive me again into the arms of your mercy, and restore me to the blessed company of your faithful people; through him in whom you have redeemed the world, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Priest may then offer words of comfort and counsel.

Priest

Will you turn again to Christ as your Lord?

Penitent I will.

Priest

Do you, then, forgive those who have sinned against you?

Penitent I forgive them.

Priest

May Almighty God in mercy receive your confession of sorrow and of faith, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

The Priest then lays a hand upon the penitent's head (or extends a hand over the penitent), saying one of the following

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered himself to be sacrificed for us to the Father, and who conferred power on his Church to forgive sins, absolve you through my ministry by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and restore you in the perfect peace of the Church. *Amen.*

or this

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive you all your offenses; and by his authority committed to me, I absolve you from all your sins: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

The Priest concludes

Now there is rejoicing in heaven; for you were lost, and are found; you were dead, and are now alive in Christ Jesus our Lord. Go (*or* abide) in peace. The Lord has put away all your sins.

Penitent Thanks be to God.